

Dead Creek could get much cleaner in weeks

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CAHOKIA — If the weather holds, the contaminated Dead Creek could be much cleaner by the end of January, a Solutia representative told residents Tuesday night.

Dead Creek and other areas near the old Monsanto plant in Sauget, now owned by chemical manufacturer Solutia Inc., were contaminated with PCBs, copper and other industrial chemicals beginning in the 1930s.

The areas are being cleaned up under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund program.

Don Ridenhower of Solutia told residents at a town hall meeting Tuesday that the cleanup of Dead Creek itself is nearing completion.

Sediment removal from the original cleanup area in the creek should be completed within two weeks, Ridenhower said.

The sediment is being placed in a flood- and earthquake-proof containment cell that will be sealed next summer.

Another part of the creek, known as Creek Sector F, recently was added to the

cleanup area. If the weather cooperates, crews expect to remove all the sediment from that sector over the next few weeks, Ridenhower said.

"We're expecting if things go well that we can complete that in about eight weeks, but we're starting at a bad time," he said.

Once the containment cell is capped, crews will cover the creek bed with a heavy plastic liner and then a layer of concrete to prevent the public from coming into contact with any remaining contaminants.

Since the beginning of 2000, crews have drained Dead Creek, cleared brush and debris from the creek bed and moved contaminated sediment out of the creek bed and into the containment cell, Ridenhower said.

Once the work is completed, tests will be conducted to determine whether additional contamination exists.

Solutia currently is footing the estimated \$17 million bill for the cleanup, but the U.S. EPA has proposed that the sites in Sauget and Cahokia be added to the Superfund National Priorities List, which would make the sites eligible for federal funding if necessary, said Michael Ribordy, the U.S. EPA's project manager for the sites.

News Democrat 11/28/01